



Fire Department

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City Officials Address Codes and Safeguards for Natural Christmas Tree Placement in Buildings

The National Fire Protection Association cites the newly-adopted codes

Milwaukee—(Nov. 26, 2008)—The Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) and Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) is asking Milwaukee property and business owners to follow some newly-adopted codes, cited in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) section 10.14.2, regulating the placement of natural Christmas trees inside certain buildings. NFPA 1 section 10.14.2 states: “In any occupancy, limited quantities of combustible vegetation shall be permitted where the authority having jurisdiction determines that adequate safeguards are provided based on the quantity and nature of the combustible vegetation.” DNS issued the adequate safeguards Milwaukee property and business owners should implement when placing a natural Christmas tree inside any home or building. One and two-family homes are exempt from following the newly-adopted codes and adequate safeguards; however, these residents are highly recommended to take the same precautions to ensure safety.

“We want every person in Milwaukee to enjoy a safe holiday and to help prevent any fire hazards that are prevalent during this time of year,” said MFD Fire Chief Douglas A. Holton. “Property owners need to be aware of the new rules and follow these precautions to avoid a holiday fire.”

The following are the adequate safeguards city officials are asking all Milwaukee property and business owners to implement:

1. A support device should be used to secure the tree and hold it in an upright position. The device must be of sufficient size to prevent the tree from tipping over, and capable of holding a two-day supply of water. The water level must cover the tree stem at least two inches and be checked daily.
2. Any portion of the tree cannot obstruct a means of egress (exit) in the home or building.
3. Any heating source such as heating vents, space heaters, candles, fireplaces, and all open flames should be kept away from the tree at a distance equal to its height or more.
4. Only use holiday lights listed by an approved testing laboratory.
5. Any natural Christmas tree that is allowed to dry out should be removed from the building immediately.

6. The bottom end of natural Christmas trees should be cut off with a straight fresh cut at a ½ inch above the end prior to placing the tree in a stand.

7. Natural Christmas trees placed inside a home or building should only be kept up for two weeks.

“Collaboratively the Milwaukee Fire Department and the Department of Neighborhood Services are taking a proactive approach to ensure our residents are fire safe during the holidays,” said DNS Operations Manager Tom Mishefske. “By following commonsense fire-safety practices we all can enjoy a fire-safe holiday.”

If the following adequate safeguards are not implemented in buildings that have to comply, DNS will address the issue on a complaint basis. If a violation is discovered during a complaint inspection, an immediate order to remove the natural Christmas tree will be issued. The owner or tenant is also subject to a fine.

For more information regarding natural Christmas tree fire safety, please call DNS at 414-286-2268, or visit www.city.milwaukee.gov/wintersafety and/or www.city.milwaukee.gov/befiresafe. You can also visit the Milwaukee Fire Department Web site at www.milwaukee.gov/mfd.

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